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News Release



Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality
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DEQ, EPA continue assessment of areas impacted by Hurricane Rita

BATON ROUGE – The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality's Southwest Regional and Acadiana Offices are operating on the front lines as DEQ and EPA assess the environmental impact from Hurricane Rita. DEQ issued an emergency declaration to address waste water treatment systems, solid waste management, hazardous waste, open burning, air pollution sources other than open burning, asbestos cleanup, general conditions and more.

Flyovers along the coast from Wax Lake in St. Mary Parish to the Sabine River revealed 33 oil spills. The aerial reconnaissance will continue in the impacted areas. A flyover of the industrial areas didn't show any problems and on the ground assessments are ongoing. In areas that are inaccessible, responders are trying to reach the facilities by phone.

DEQ's Southwest Regional Office in Lake Charles is taking calls and responding to complaints. A recon and assessment team is inspecting the publicly owned treatment plants to determine their status, assess the damage and note any environmental concerns. Two teams are going to some of the major industrial facilities to answer the same questions. Teams have not reached Cameron Parish because of the flooding. As the flood waters recede, DEQ inspection teams will survey the area.

The DEQ Acadiana Office in Lafayette is fully functional and is assessing facilities, responding to oil spills, responding to complaints and assessing damage in Vermilion, Iberia and St Mary parishes. The teams are doing assessments at production, storage and industrial facilities. Some parts of Vermilion and St Mary parishes are flooded and inaccessible. The water is receding but it is estimated that more than 26,000 homes have been under water in the area.

EPA has emergency response teams in the impacted area.

DEQ contact information is as follows:

- Southwest Regional Office 337-491-2756
- Lake Charles EOC 337-437-7709
- Lafayette Acadiana Office 337-262-5584

To report an environmental hazard or incident to LDEQ, call 1-888-763-5424 or in Baton Rouge 225- 219-3640. The National Response Center number to report environmental hazards is 1-800-424-8802

To view the emergency declaration, visit www.deq.louisiana.gov. For more EPA information on Hurricanes Katrina and Rita response activities, please visit: <http://epa.gov/region6/katrina/index.htm>